

# **"Buckroe, by the Sea, Resort Hotels, Roller Coasters and Pound Nets"**

Prepared by the Buckroe Historical  
Society

Around 1897,  
the amusement  
began to appear.  
Next came the  
hotels, cottages,  
shops, and then  
the train tracks  
were extended  
to the beach.



Prior to the Amusement Park & Buckroe Hotel, Mary Ann Dobbins Herbert built the first boarding house and bathhouse at Buckroe Beach, thus creating a resort for beach goers

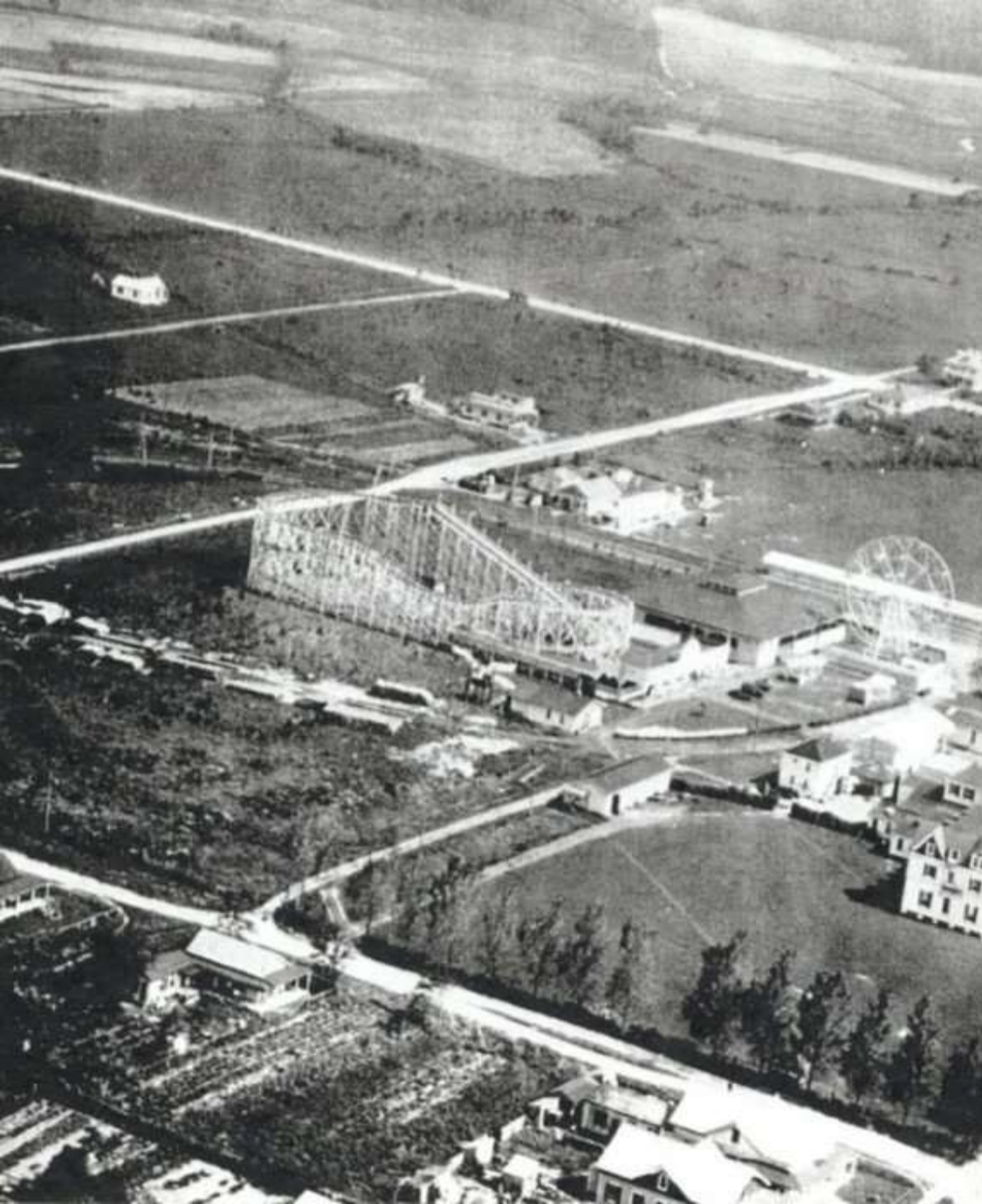
Local fishermen embarking to work their pound nets.  
This photo courtesy of Curwin Abbott





This early photo shows the amusement park. Note the cottages in the background. The roads at this point are unpaved.





The first roller coaster appears. The Wagoner Hotel is at the very bottom right. Buckroe for the most part is undeveloped.



First excursion - 1914 - on the street car track into Buckroe Beach

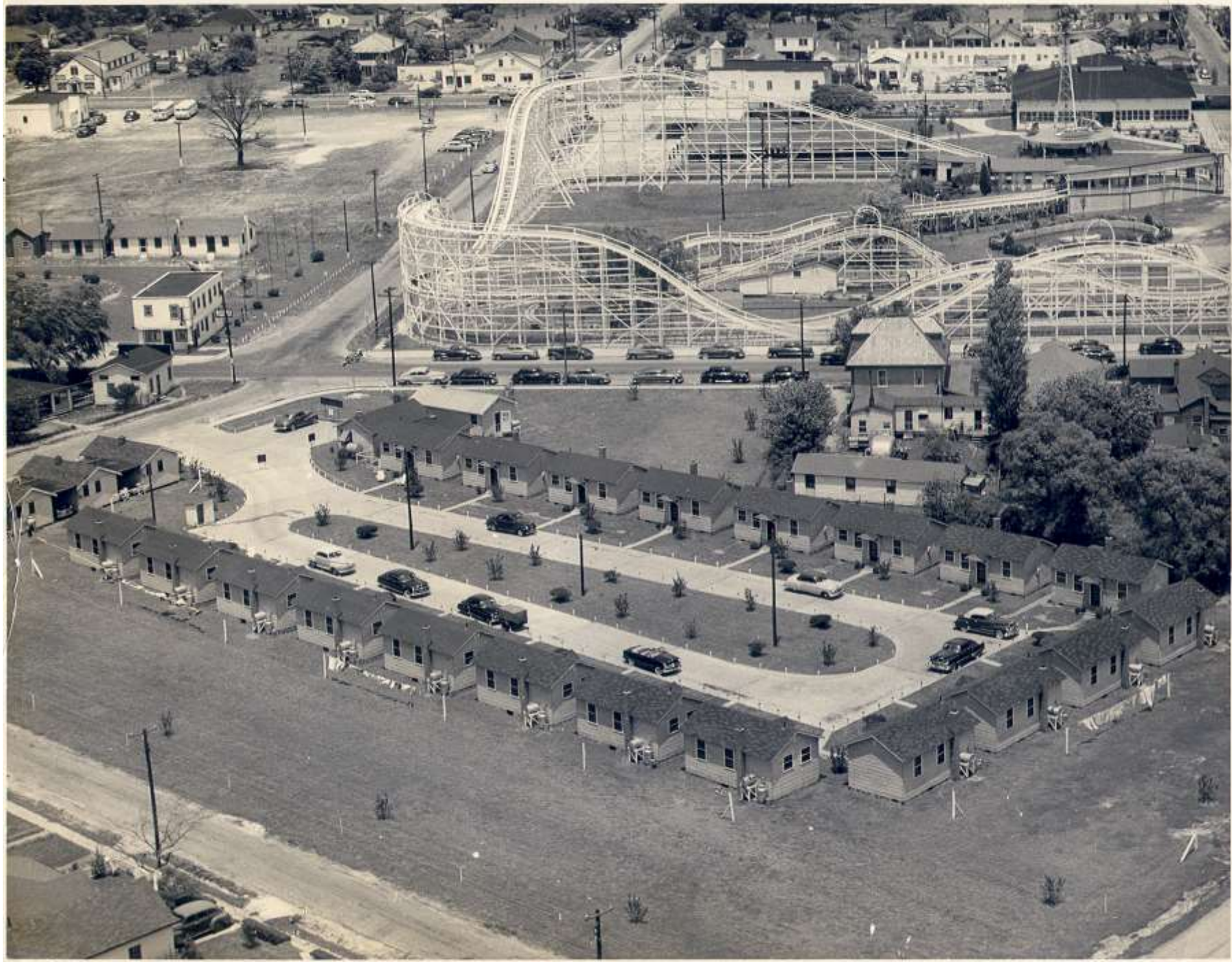
The train also shared the tracks with the street cars. The critical elements were now in place. The phrase that best fits Buckroe at this point would be, "If you build it, they will come."

With all the infrastructure in place, beautiful girls will bring the men and their money. Buckroe had become the point of destination.



These swim suits were dangerous to bathers. The potential to get entangled in the swimwear could be fatal in the water. The suits would also hold a lot of water & make it hard to maneuver.









BUCKRODE BEACH RESORT  
PLATINGS OF COURSE  
1 GOOD FOR 1  
MAJOR RIDE 1  
NO. 10000  
Good for 10000

The previous 2 slides depict how growth of the area surrounding the amusement park had accelerated. People built homes that had cottages that brought in income. The Buckroe Civic Association was created. A school was built. Grocery stores popped up, as did restaurants, & fast food establishments. Many of us kids worked at the Amusement park and surrounding businesses during the summer.



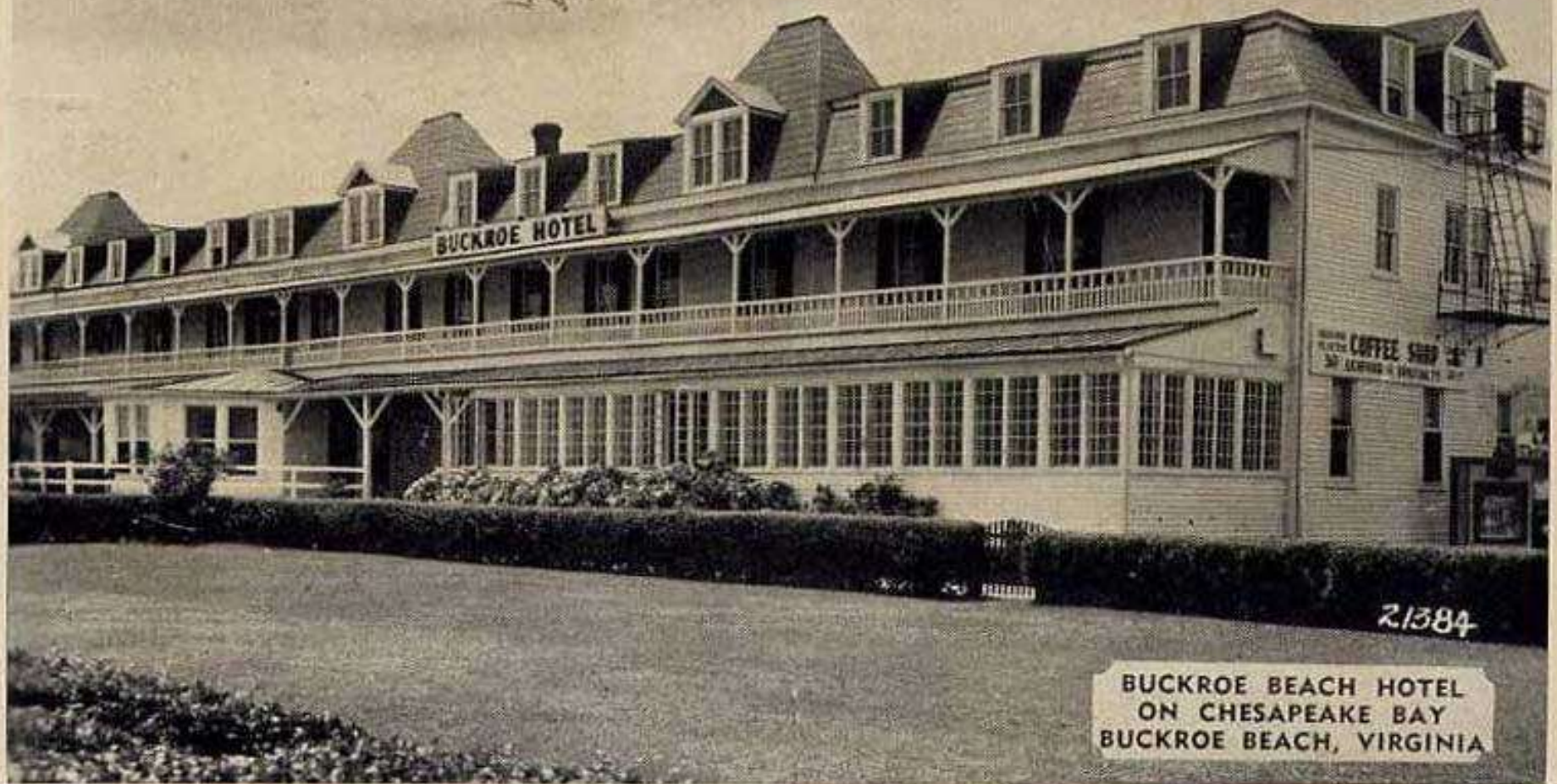
WAGONER'S HOTEL AND BATH HOUSE, BUCKROE BEACH, VA.



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The Wagoner Hotel was built at the same site currently occupied by the Sans Souci





The Buckroe Hotel was erected on the Amusement Park Property facing the water just south of the where the lighthouse is currently located.



Located on Historic Hampton Roads

Coolest Spot in Tidewater Virginia Section

# BEAUTIFUL BUCKROE BEACH

This Resort, Now Famous Throughout the State as "Virginia's Breathing Spot,"  
WILL BE OPENED TO THE PUBLIC

## Monday, May 17th, 1909

With Every High-Class Amusement That Goes to Make a Popular Summer Resort.

## Excellent Salt Water Bathing!

The Bath Houses have been materially improved, with every convenience for patrons, and with sufficient room to accommodate an army of bathers at one time. There is no better beach to be found anywhere than at BUCKROE. It is the ideal bathing shore of the Atlantic Coast.

Large Pavilion and Park for the Accommodation of Excursion and Picnic Parties, Free, the Management Catering Specially to Church and Society Excursions.

## Buckroe Beach Is Easy of Access From All Points

And Is Easily Reached From All Sections of the Peninsula Over the electric lines.

FOR PARTICULARS, ADDRESS:

Newport News & Old Point Railway & Electric Co.

W. W. S. BUTLER, Genl. Mgr., Hampton, Virginia.

Buckroe Beach Hotel, With First-Class Accommodations, Will Open About June 1st.  
Make Your Reservations NOW.

This local advertisement from the Daily Press encouraged local visitors to make their reservations and enjoy all the Buckroe environment had to offer

# TOURNAMENT

Buckroe Beach

**TUES, SEPT. 12-'05.**

## RULES:

1. Tilting will begin at two o'clock p. m.
2. Knights required to appear in costume.
3. Knights will be required to pay an entrance fee of \$2.50 each.
4. Rings will be 1 1-2 inches in diameter.
5. Rings to hang six feet seven inches from the ground.
6. Any Knight failing to make the required time will be disqualified. This rule does not apply to the trial ride, which will be allowed each for the purpose of testing the speed at which he is letting his horse go. The timekeepers will notify each Knight upon his return of the exact time he has made on the tilt.
7. No extra rides will be allowed any Knight on account of any fault of man or horse unless interfered with by some outside force over which he has no control.
8. In case of ties the size of rings will be reduced to one inch after the third tilt of the contestants.
9. Distance between arches 20 yards.
10. Time, five seconds from a point ten yards from first arch to last arch.
11. Lance must be not less than nine feet long, balance not less than four feet from point.
12. Knights will be required to be in position mounted and ready to charge when their names are called and will charge at the sound of the trumpet. Any Knight not in such position will be dropped and the next on the list called. The Knight so dropped will be allowed his tilt after the rest of the Knights have tilted.
13. There will be no appeal from the decision of the judges.
14. Any Knight wishing to note a protest will do so on his return to the judges' stand after the tilt on which he desires to make such protest, stating the facts only. The judges will render their decisions in such matters before the riding off of ties immediately after the regular tilting.

## PRIZES.

FIRST PRIZE	=	=	=	=	=	\$40.00
SECOND PRIZE	=	=	=	=	=	10.00
THIRD PRIZE	=	=	=	=	=	5.00

High Jumping Contest immediately after tilting.  
Restricted to Peninsula horses and riders. Highest  
jump will be awarded.

**\$5.00**

Coronation Address in the Pavilion at Buckroe Beach at 8:30 p. m.  
followed by royal set and banquet.

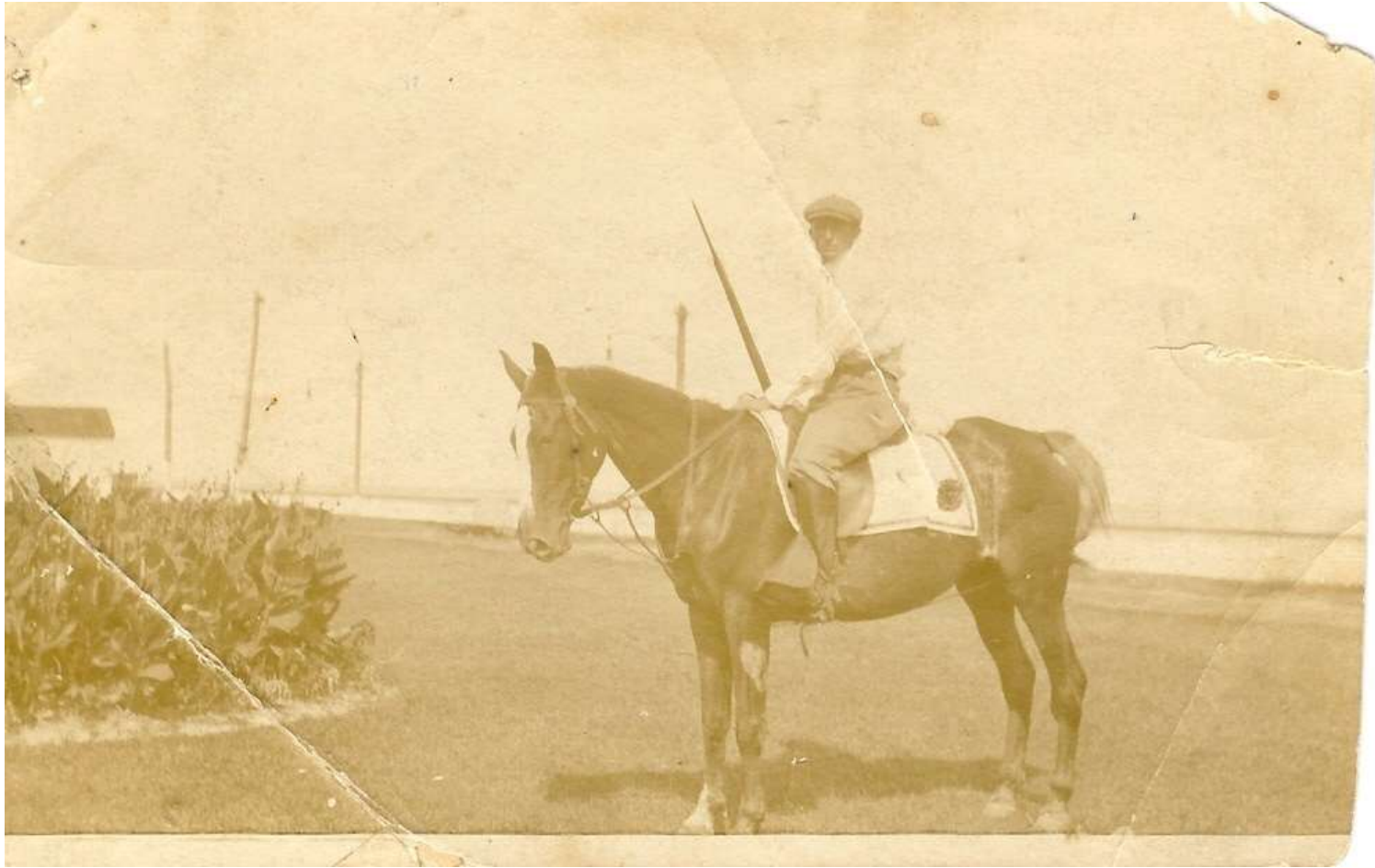
**10¢ ADMISSION TO THE WHOLE SHOW.**

Jousting tournaments were held in front of the Buckroe Hotel. I am curious how all the horses were transported there and where they were housed



Tournament at Buckroe Beach  
near Old Point, Va.





A local resident, Walter Lee, offered this picture of his uncle, who used to participate in the local jousting tournaments.



## The Mutoscope

For Pennies    A Moving Picture Machine



Size, 4 feet, 6 inches high. Shipping weight, 225 pounds

Very popular in all public places

16

The Mutoscope, which were invented in the 1890's, became a staple of entertainment in the Penny Arcade. A carousel of sequenced still photographs was operated by turning a hand crank, thus giving the illusion of watching a movie. There were about twenty of these penny-operated machines inside the Penny Arcade. Years later, all these machines became property of the Smithsonian Museum.







For a mere 1 cent, you could test your ability to withstand a mild electrocution. While holding one knob, the operator held on to and turned the other knob. The more one rotated the knob, the more voltage a person would feel. How this actually improved your health remains a mystery. This was another machine featured in the Penny Arcade.



“Cover Girl” was a very popular pinball machine. There was one in the Penny Arcade as well as one in the Park Soda Shop. There was some of us that could play that machine for hours for a minimal amount of change.



Another machine found in the Penny Arcade. One could select the letters, pull the handle on the right side and stamp those letters onto a thin “coin”. You did not win a prize, but many a lad professed his love for a teenage girl with the help of this machine.



25¢ PULL A STRING 25¢  
NO - BLANKS

IF YOU PULL UP IS YOUR LUCK  
REMARKS, SAVE YOUR COUPON FOR A BOUNTY PRIZE









In this undated photo, the Ski-Ball concession is shown. Each game operator wore an apron that was always full of dimes to make change, as well as coupons that they would give to patrons for their scores. Behind the employees on the wall is a chart showing how many coupons would be awarded for different level scores. Near the Ski-Ball concession was the shooting gallery, the photo booth, the miniature golf course, & the Nickel Pitch. There was also a concession stand where the object was to knock metal bottles off a table with baseballs.

Up on the pavilion, there were additional games of chance and skill. Among those games there was a ring-toss game called “Ringo”, a cigarette-dart game, a game called Tic-Tac-Toe that utilized wiffle balls thrown into a container, Over and Under, a Pool Game that required a lot of skill, a Handwriting Analysis booth, and Spin-Art. The Buckroe Historical Society is still searching for pictures of these concession stands, as well as the gift shop, popcorn stand and the food stands.





# K I D D I E L A N D

Here is shown the boat ride, the car ride, and the small Ferris Wheel



The train was a very popular attraction in Kiddieland.





Here is shown the last home in Buckroe of the Merry-Go-Round. In the background is the rise for the boats on the Tunnel-of-Love ride.



Some horses went up and down, some remained still. There was even a chariot to ride for those who did not want to ride a horse. The calliope music from the carousel is eternal to those of us that rode this as a child.



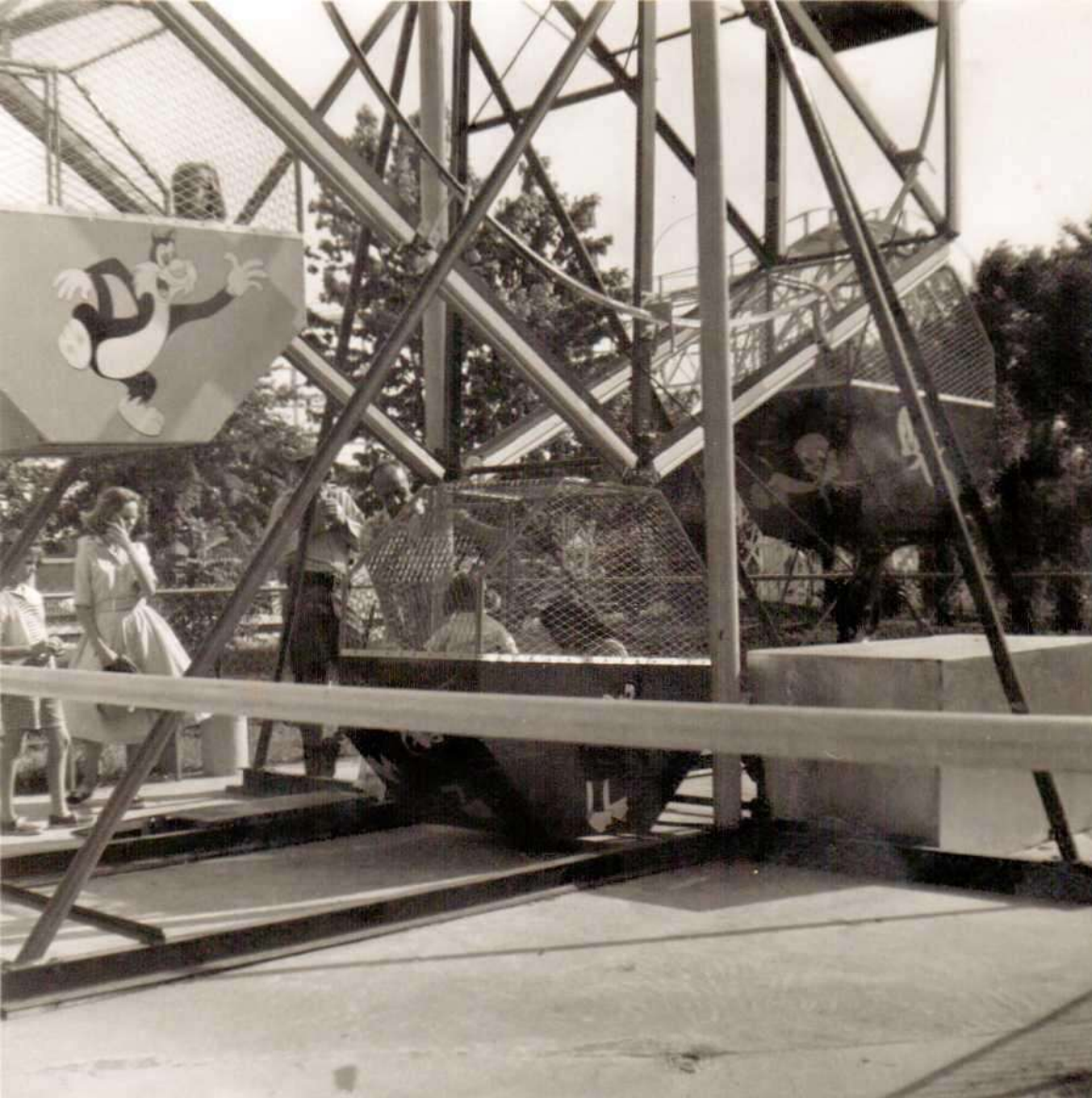


The beautiful sculpted wooden horses were painted in bright colors. After the park closed, the carousel was restored and relocated to downtown Hampton.



Another view of the Merry-Go-Round as seen from the Roller Coaster. In this view, you can also see the roof of the train station, the small Ferris wheel, and even a part of the fishing pier.





The Small Ferris Wheel provided special feature for its riders- a cage. Each car was carrying a very special cargo, and was painted with various Looneytoon characters



# The Rocket Ride



Each passenger had his own gun. Once the ride started, it rose up about 6 foot from the ground. The guns only made a buzzing sound, but many of us kids were destroying aliens as fast as we could





Chantall and Howard Lyeth are steering their way on the high seas while aboard the boat ride in Kiddieland. The boats are all gone, but one of our members has one of the bells that were mounted forward on each boat.



On the far left is “The Bullet”. It spun round and round and the cars (2) rotated. It was there in the fifties but was replaced with the “Octopus”. I believe “The Bullet” was removed as it was deemed too dangerous. The Ferris Wheel is in the foreground.

On the right is the “Swinging Gyms”. The object was to rock the cage back and forth, gathering momentum, until one could make the cage swing over the top and complete a revolution. Experienced riders were able to make the cage complete several revolutions before their time was up. The “Swinging Gyms” was situated near the monkey cages and was only there a couple years.







The “Bumper Cars” was located next to “the Cascades. Drivers of all ages (8 and up) would drive, collide, and just have a grand time while many people would stand on the outside and enjoy watching.



As many as two people could share a car. The old cars did not have seat belts, body restraints, neck protection, or even brakes.



One has to wonder if parents watched their children's driving abilities and determined if they were really ready to drive the family car when they were older.



The “Scrambler” would rotate, spin, and gather speed, sending the occupants sliding about the car. Once again, no seat belts or other body restraints. Still, it was a lot of fun, and close to the bathrooms, which was a benefit to many









The Paratrooper came to Buckroe in the late sixties.





Do not ride this on a full stomach



The airplane ride was one of the oldest and tamest rides in the park. Once the ride began, centrifugal force caused the plane to extend outward. The Ferris Wheel and the Buckroe Hotel are in the background.

These two lovely ladies were getting ready to ride the Octopus, an eight arm ride that that went up and down in a circle while the cars would spin around. I would be surprised if the hat made it through the ride.



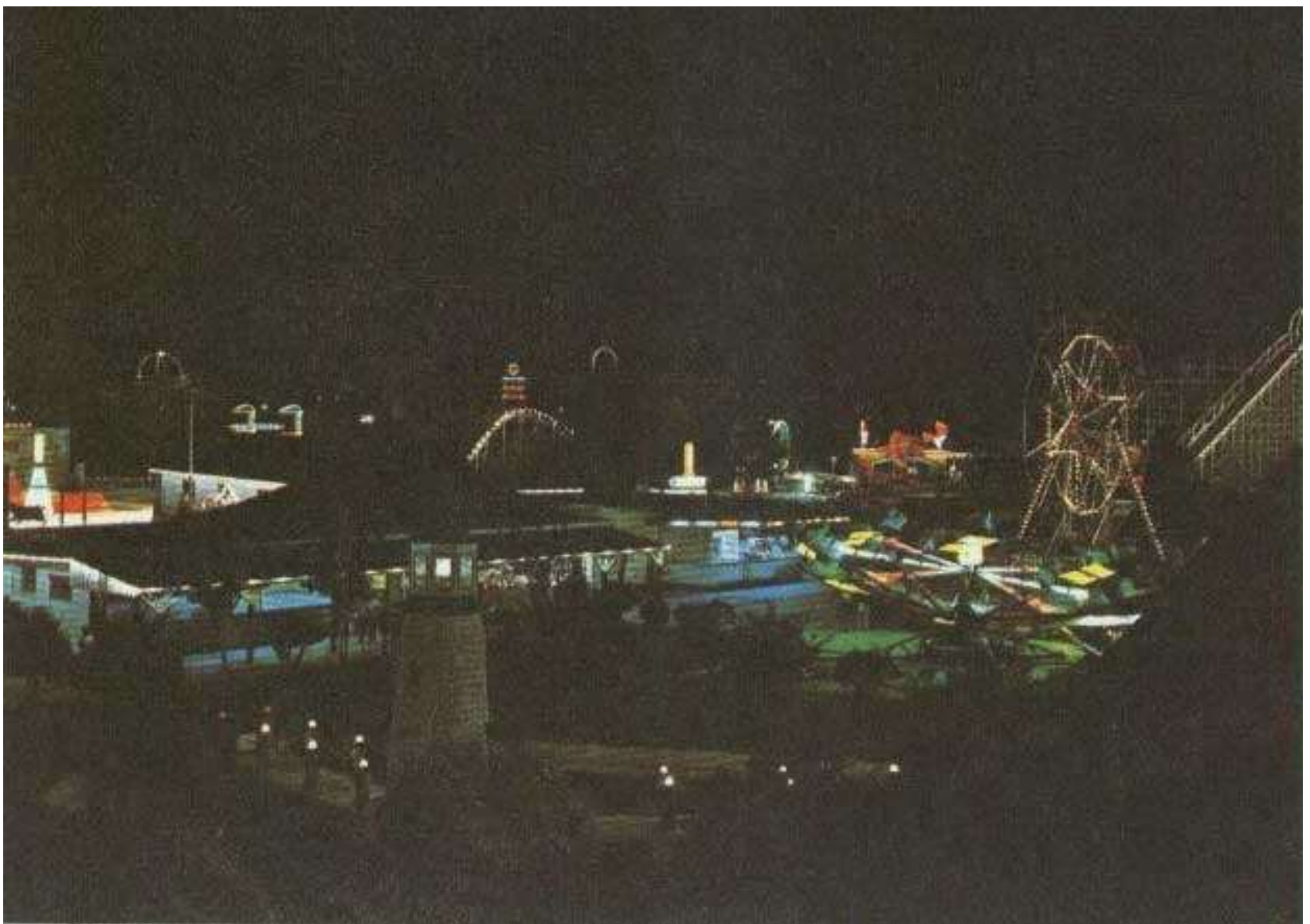




The Ferris Wheel was a very popular ride in the Amusement Park until 1970. The view that it provided from the top was spectacular.



Night time picture of the Scrambler and the Paratrooper



Nighttime, showing the lighthouse, Ferris Wheel, the hill of the Old Mill Stream, and Harold Parrish's food stand.





Another nighttime photo, showing the newer airplane ride on the left, the Paratrooper at the rear. There were lots of beautiful lights that made for scenic nighttime photography.



Each boat wound through a watery cave, in almost complete darkness. At the end of the tunnel, the boat would climb a wooden rise, and then plummet down into the pool and coast to a stop at the dock. Many people got soaking wet from the experience.





This ride was called the Cascades & the Old Mill Stream, possibly the most famous name was the Tunnel of Love. Teenager couples would try to get their own boat with only two people aboard .





The Funhouse was especially scary for first time adventurers. Ladies with dresses discovered that at certain places in the two story structure when they stepped in a certain spot, compressed air would blown their dress up in the air. Most of them screamed- if not out of fear, embarrassment. The constant insane laughter could be heard throughout the amusement park.

Probably the fastest 2 minutes of your life.



Inspected daily. Many of us thought it was rickety. But, it was probably the best constructed ride in the park. To my knowledge, only one death was ever attributed to the “Dips”. That patron was not sober and stood up on a curve and was ejected.



Looking down that first dip







Gus Becouvarakis, owner of the Paradise Inn, circa 1933. This photo, courtesy of the Greg Becouvarakis family.



The Paradise Inn, at the end of Pembroke Avenue at the beach. (circa 1933)  
This picture courtesy of the Greg Becouvarakis family.



The inside of the Paradise Inn during the 1950's. This picture courtesy of the Greg Becouvarakis family.





George Gasparis, center, owner of the American Grill, circa 1949. At that time this was located at the corner of Barrett & Bonnell (later Resort Blvd). This picture courtesy of the Gasparis-Dermanis family.



American Grill on Bonnell St.  
The establishment to the right of the American Grill became Tony's Grill. To the left of the American Grill was the U.S. Grill

In this picture the Breakwater Hotel is on the left, The Richmond Steak House is on the right. Adjacent to that is The Beachcomber. Harry's Place was also part of this building. This picture is looking down Resort Blvd towards Buckroe Avenue. Featured in this photo is Anna Gasparis & her daughter Kathy.

These two pictures courtesy of the Gasparis-Dermanis family





The Waterview Motel was on Resort Blvd. near Buckroe Avenue





The Golden Sands was on North Mallory, two blocks from the main gate



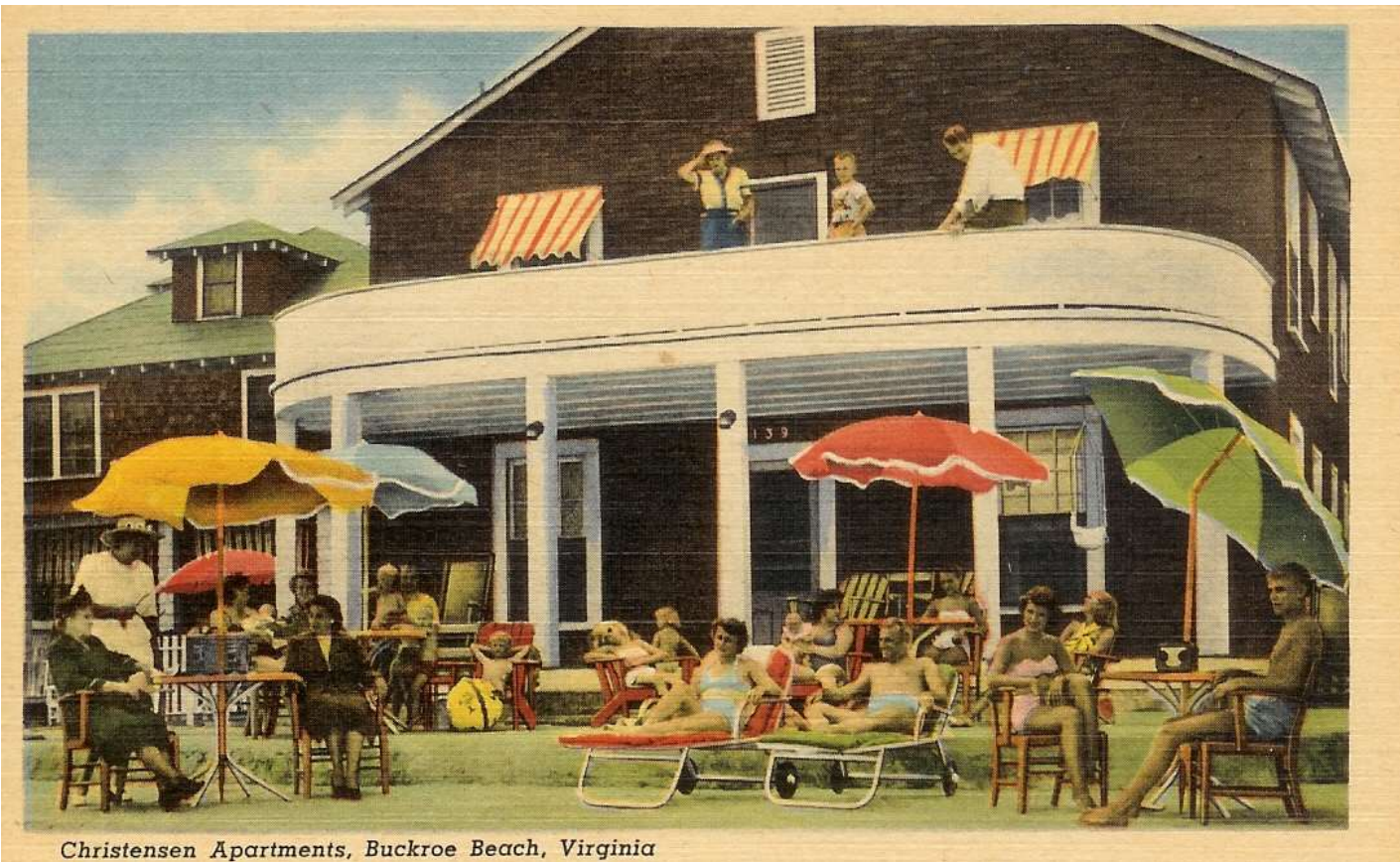
The San Souci was the first beach front motel in Buckroe to offer an in-ground swimming pool. It was built by Milton Ghivazanni, whose family ran it for many years.





The Waterview Motel was on Resort Blvd on the site of the former Groves Inn.





Christensen Apartments not only offered rooms, they offered meals. This was located near the end of Tappan Avenue at 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Many other similar apartment buildings offered food as well as lodging.





Lane's Hotel or Tourist Home  
Buckroe Beach, Va.

35834

Lane's was located at the corner of Mallory & Pembroke. Years later it was renamed Frank's Harbor House, and finally, Marty's Harbor House.





Fast food

Buckroe style



WHERE OLD FRIENDS MEET - BUCKROE BEACH, VA.



# Barney's



**...at Buckroe Beach**

Barney's offered our version of fast food, plus a side order of rock music. Jerry Harden operated Barney's for many years.



Art Stewart is shown here at Sonny's Restaurant. Sonny's was located on Point Comfort and was right behind the San Souci. They offered a simple menu, plus a pool table, pinball machine, jukebox, and air conditioning.



The Park Soda Shop served grilled food. The building also housed a beauty salon, the fire station, and the business office of the Amusement Park. The Soda Shop and the amusement park food stands did not sell any alcoholic beverages.





It came to an end. Just what caused the demise of the Buckroe Amusement Park? Blame it on Busch Gardens & King's Dominion. Those two venues certainly were a factor. The last year, the insurance for the amusement park was \$500,000.00. Redevelopment erased many places that supported the park. The Ash Wednesday started the gradual slide by destroying businesses, homes, and cottages.

Probably the biggest factor was that there was not enough people attending and spending money. No one was willing to invest in bringing new businesses to the area. The massive cost of doing business was a huge negative influence.

